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ABSTRACT

Providing clear and timely information will be a key to holding public support for the improvements the No Child Left Behind Act promises. To have an impact, this information needs to be presented on the public's terms. This report contains data on recent public opinion about education issues, gathered from several polls conducted by national organizations. Graphs show that improving schools is a top priority, and that the public generally agrees that change is needed. There is strong support for the reforms in the new federal law, especially for requiring teachers to be licensed in the subjects they teach. There is strong support for closing the achievement gap, but most attribute the gap to factors outside school walls. The public strongly supports standards and accountability, but support for testing has limits. Testing in moderation is supported, and using test scores in addition to teacher evaluations receives public support. The public generally believes that education should be protected from budget cuts, and support for education outweighs support for all other spending priorities combined. Teacher support for standards, testing, and accountability is waning, in comparison with 1999 findings. Teachers think parent involvement and lack of discipline are top problems facing schools. Students take learning seriously, but feel that too much emphasis is placed on test scores. (Contains 12 references.) (SLD)



EDUCATION INITIATIVE

WHAT PARENTS, STUDENTS AND TEACHERS THINK ABOUT STANDARDS, TESTS, ACCOUNTABILITY ... AND MORE

Updated March 2003

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THE BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE
AN ASSOCIATION OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS COMMITTED TO IMPROVING PUBLIC POLICY

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INTRODUCTION

With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the K–12 education system as we know it will be under the microscope with an unprecedented focus on accountability for improving student performance. As states begin to implement the new law, public understanding and support for these sweeping changes is essential.

Recent public opinion data show a public supportive of the new law's goals and hungry for more information about their schools. However, there is some growing concern about an overemphasis on testing and the availability of resources, particularly among teachers. If policymakers can show how testing and accountability will lead to targeted help for students who are otherwise overlooked, these concerns can be turned into support.

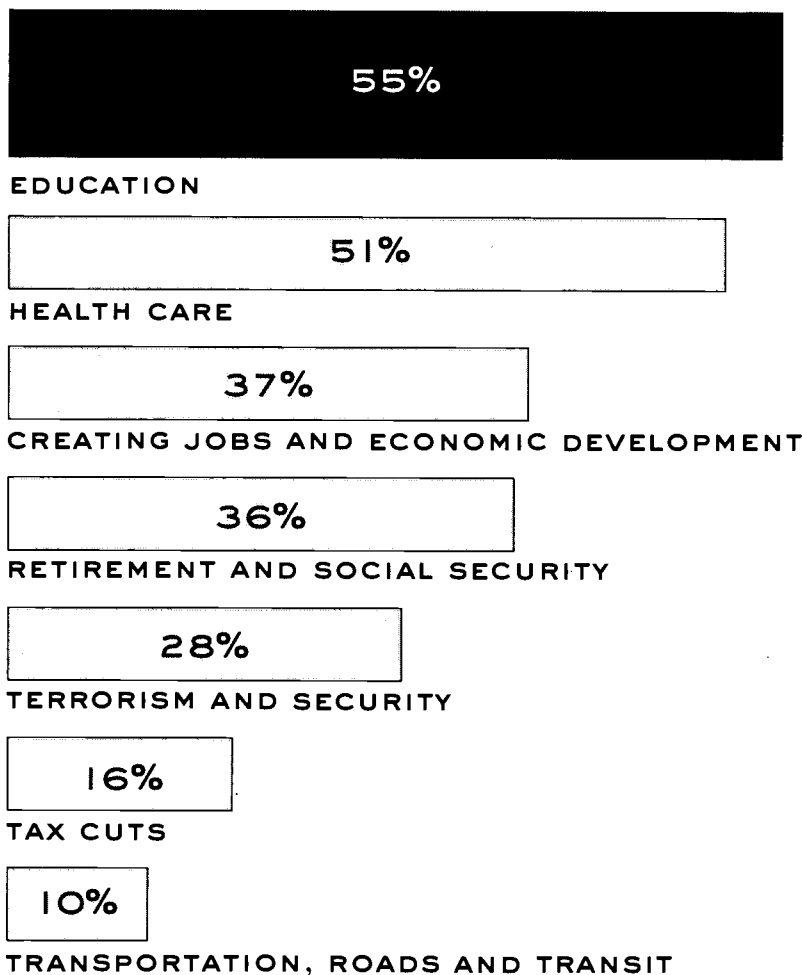
Providing clear and timely information will be a key to holding public support for the improvements the new law promises. Indeed, a centerpiece of NCLB is its pledge to provide an unprecedented amount of information to parents, taxpayers and other interested stakeholders. To have an impact, however, this information needs to be presented on the public's terms — clarifying how the law reinforces their priorities and addresses their concerns.

The following look at recent public opinion data offers a useful starting point. It provides insights into how parents and the public, teachers and students view reforms in their schools — and where support can be tapped and mobilized.

WHAT THE PUBLIC THINKS ...

Strong Support for Change

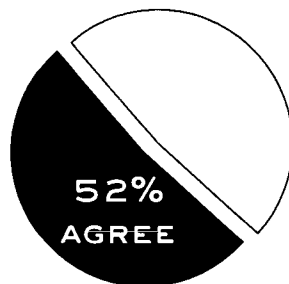
▶ IMPROVING SCHOOLS IS TOP PRIORITY



Source: *Demanding Quality Public Education in Tough Economic Times*,
Public Education Network/*Education Week* poll, 2003

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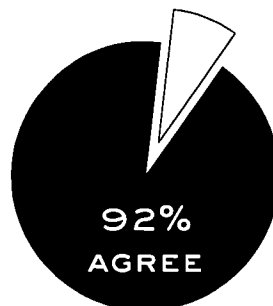
▶ CHANGE IS NEEDED



THE NATION'S EDUCATION SYSTEM NEEDS
MAJOR CHANGES OR A COMPLETE OVERHAUL

Source: Hart/Teeter ETS poll, May 2002

▶ IMPROVEMENT IS POSSIBLE



PROVIDING ALL CHILDREN WITH A
QUALITY EDUCATION IS AN ATTAINABLE GOAL

Source: *Accountability for All*, Public Education Network/*Education Week* poll, 2002

Strong Support for No Child Left Behind and Accountability

▶ SUPPORT FOR REFORMS IN THE NEW FEDERAL LAW

96% SUPPORT

REQUIRING TEACHERS TO BE LICENSED IN THE SUBJECTS THEY TEACH

90% SUPPORT

OFFERING TUTORING FOR STUDENTS IN LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

86% SUPPORT

OFFERING "IN-DISTRICT" CHOICE FOR STUDENTS IN LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

67% SUPPORT

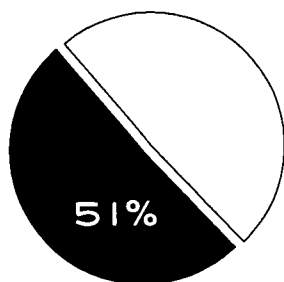
MANDATED TESTING IN GRADES THREE THROUGH EIGHT

57% SUPPORT

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S INCREASED INVOLVEMENT

Source: Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll, September 2002

► FEW WANT TO RETREAT FROM CONTINUED EMPHASIS ON HIGHER STANDARDS



AGREE THAT REAL REFORM IS ABOUT RAISING STANDARDS, HOLDING SCHOOLS ACCOUNTABLE AND GIVING PARENTS MORE OPTIONS, COMBINED WITH TARGETED FUNDING INCREASES, AND NOT ABOUT SIMPLY INCREASING FUNDING

Source: Americans for Better Education, 2003

Staying the Course in Massachusetts

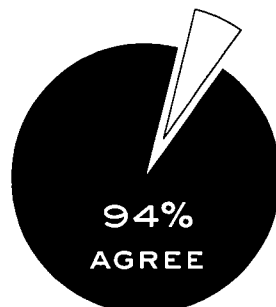
Even in the midst of a turbulent year for standards-based reform in Massachusetts, 57 percent of parents with children in school favor continued use of the state's standardized test as a high school graduation requirement.

And residents who are aware of the multiple opportunities to take the test and access extra help for struggling students support the state's standards-and-stakes strategy by more than 2 to 1.

For more, go to www.massinsight.com.

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▶ **STRONG SUPPORT FOR CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP ...**



**CLOSING THE GAP IN ACHIEVEMENT
BETWEEN DIFFERENT GROUPS OF STUDENTS
IS "VERY" OR "SOMEWHAT" IMPORTANT**

Source: Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll, September 2002

▶ **BUT MOST ATTRIBUTE THE GAP TO FACTORS OUTSIDE SCHOOL WALLS**

66% AGREE

**OTHER FACTORS LIKE POVERTY AND
HOMELIFE ARE THE SOURCE OF THE GAP**

29% AGREE

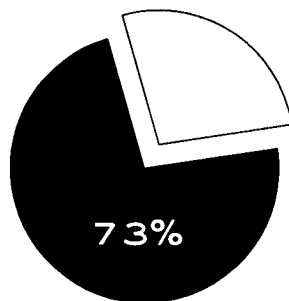
SCHOOLING IS THE SOURCE OF THE GAP

Source: Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll, September 2002

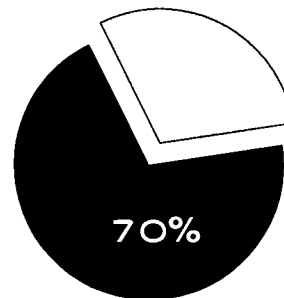
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Most Want a Balanced Approach

▶ THE PUBLIC STRONGLY SUPPORTS STANDARDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY



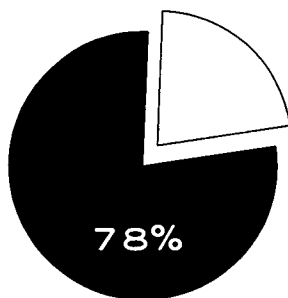
FAVOR TESTING
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND
HOLDING TEACHERS AND
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
RESPONSIBLE FOR STUDENT
LEARNING



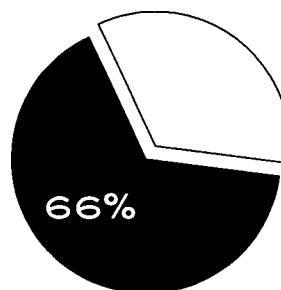
FAVOR TESTING
TEACHERS ON THEIR KNOWLEDGE
OF SUBJECT AREAS AND
TEACHING SKILLS

Source: Hart/Teeter ETS poll, May 2002

▶ BUT SUPPORT FOR TESTING HAS LIMITS



PARENTS SAY "IT'S NOT
FAIR TO PUT SO MUCH
PRESSURE ON STUDENTS
BASED ON THE RESULTS
OF ONE TEST"

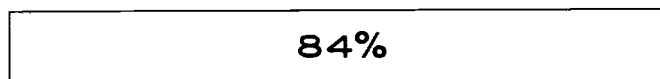


AGREE AN OVEREMPHASIS
ON TESTING WILL LEAD
TO "TEACHING TO
THE TEST"

Source: Public Agenda, *Reality Check*, 2002

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► SUPPORT FOR TESTING IN "MODERATION"



TEACHERS



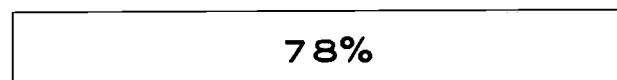
PARENTS



EMPLOYERS

Source: Public Agenda, *Reality Check*, 2002

► USING "STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES PLUS TEACHER EVALUATIONS" TO DECIDE IF STUDENTS ARE READY TO PROGRESS



TEACHERS



PARENTS



EMPLOYERS

Source: Public Agenda, *Reality Check*, 2002

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▶ INCREASED ACCOUNTABILITY WITH SUPPORT IS KEY TO IMPROVEMENT

23% AGREE

ACCOUNTABILITY IS THE BEST WAY TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTION

26% AGREE

MORE FUNDING IS THE BEST WAY TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTION

50% AGREE

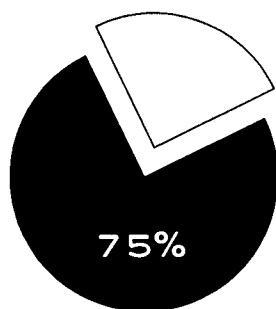
BOTH

Source: Hart/Teeter ETS poll, May 2002

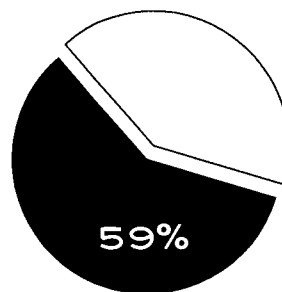
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Most Want More than Tests and Accountability

▶ PROTECT EDUCATION FROM BUDGET CUTS



**BELIEVE THAT EDUCATION
PROGRAMS IN THEIR STATE
WILL BE SERIOUSLY OR
SOMEWHAT AFFECTED BY
BUDGET CUTS**



**WOULD INCREASE STATE
TAXES TO IMPROVE
EDUCATION**

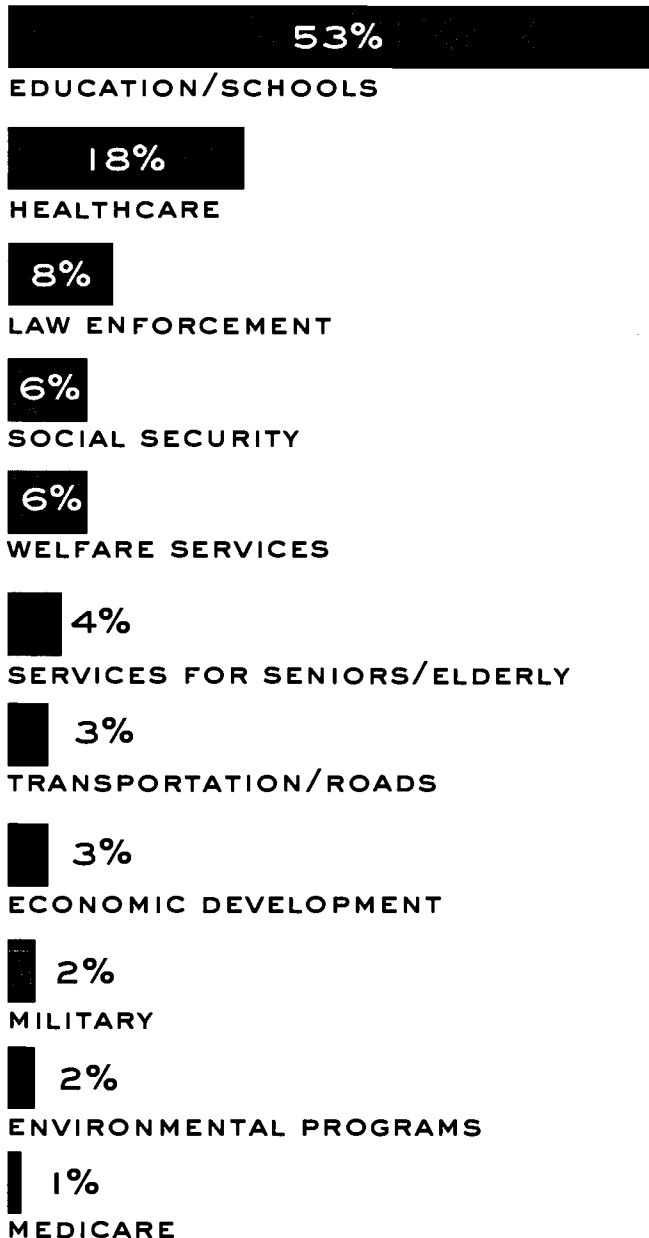
Source: *Demanding Quality Public Education in Tough Economic Times*,
Public Education Network/*Education Week* poll, 2003

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▶ IMPROVING RESULTS REQUIRES RESOURCES

Support for education funding outweighs support for all other spending priorities combined.

SPENDING PRIORITY RANKING:



Source: Hart/Teeter ETS poll, May 2002

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► OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR INCREASING TEACHER QUALITY

93% SUPPORT

TESTING TEACHERS ON KNOWLEDGE OF SUBJECT AND
TEACHING SKILLS

91% SUPPORT

OFFERING MORE TRAINING PROGRAMS SO TEACHERS CAN
CONTINUE TO LEARN AND BECOME BETTER TEACHERS

81% SUPPORT

INCREASED SALARIES FOR TEACHERS EVEN IF IT MEANS PAYING
HIGHER TAXES

73% SUPPORT

TESTING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND HOLDING TEACHERS AND
ADMINISTRATORS RESPONSIBLE FOR LEARNING

Source: Hart/Teeter ETS poll, May 2002

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► STRONG AFRICAN AMERICAN AND HISPANIC SUPPORT FOR TARGETED HELP TO STRUGGLING SCHOOLS

74% SUPPORT

OVERALL

87% SUPPORT

AFRICAN AMERICANS

82% SUPPORT

HISPANICS

75% SUPPORT

MARRIED WOMEN WITH KIDS

73% SUPPORT

CATHOLICS

66% SUPPORT

INDEPENDENTS

Source: Americans for Better Education, 2003

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► PRIORITY LIST FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT



IMPROVED TEACHING QUALITY



FUNDING EQUITY



EARLY CHILDHOOD FOCUS



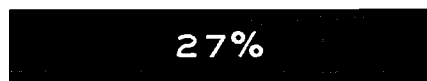
SMALLER CLASS SIZES

Source: *Accountability for All*, Public Education Network/*Education Week* poll, 2002

► TEACHING QUALITY AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT ARE TOP PROBLEMS



PARENTS' LACK OF INVOLVEMENT



A LACK OF DISCIPLINE IN THE CLASSROOM



CLASS SIZES THAT ARE TOO LARGE



A LACK OF FUNDING

Source: Hart/Teeter ETS poll, May 2002

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The Public Wants More and Better Information about Schools

Americans feel they do not have enough information to make good choices about schools. Given their high regard for public schools, many people would rather not vote than make a mistake and choose the wrong candidate for public office based on insufficient or inconclusive data.

The public wants information about literacy rates, teacher qualifications, teacher quality and school safety. They also are interested in the availability of quality learning tools, school budgets and the ratings of local schools compared to others in the state or district.

Voters are less interested in standardized test scores and information about teacher salaries.

Source: *Accountability for All*, Public Education Network/*Education Week* poll, 2002



WHO IS THE MOST CREDIBLE INFORMATION SOURCE?



TEACHERS



PARENTS



COLLEGE



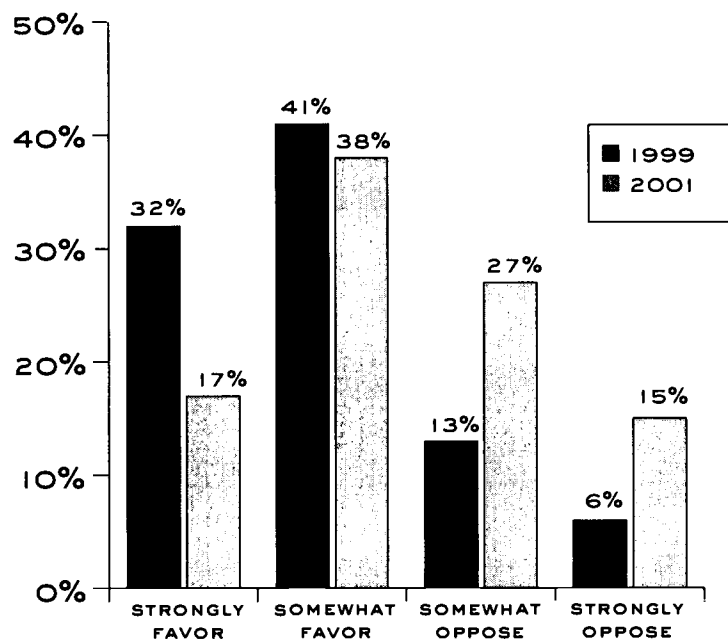
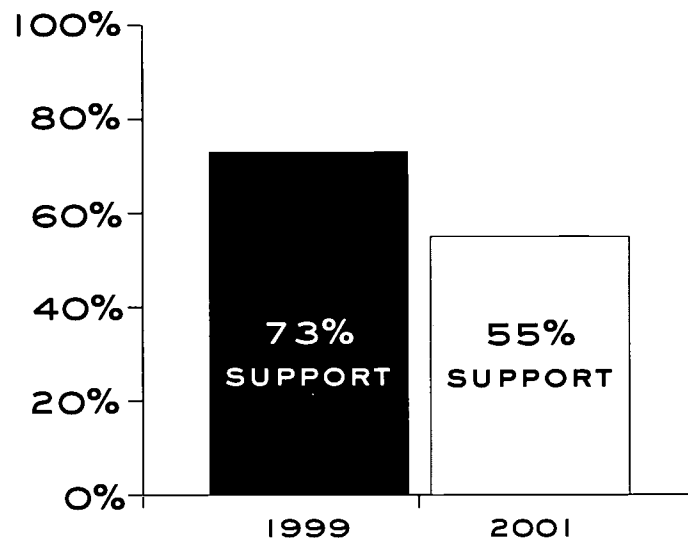
BUSINESS LEADERS

Source: The Business Roundtable, 2000

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WHAT TEACHERS THINK ...

► SUPPORT FOR STANDARDS, TESTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY IS WANING



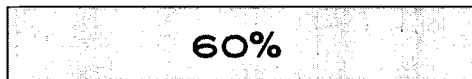
Sources: Albert Shanker Institute, American Federation of Teachers

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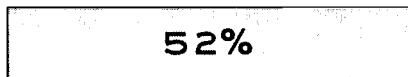
► SUPPORT FOR TESTING IN "MODERATION"



TEACHERS



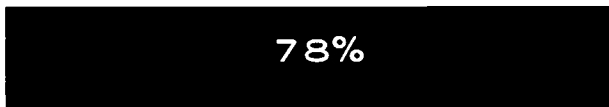
PARENTS



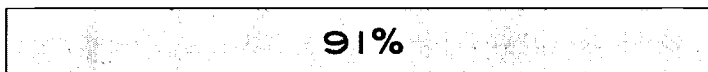
EMPLOYERS

Source: Public Agenda, *Reality Check*, 2002

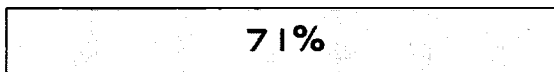
► USING "STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES PLUS TEACHER EVALUATIONS" TO DECIDE IF STUDENTS ARE READY TO PROGRESS



TEACHERS



PARENTS

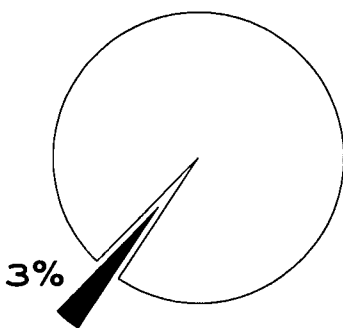


EMPLOYERS

Source: Public Agenda, *Reality Check*, 2002

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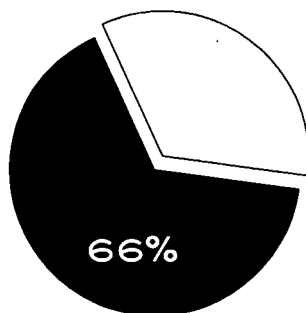
▶ TESTS RARELY USED AS SOLE BASIS FOR PROMOTION



TEACHERS REPORT THAT STUDENTS IN THEIR SCHOOLS ARE PROMOTED BASED SOLELY ON STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES

Source: Public Agenda, *Reality Check*, 2002

▶ WANT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HOW TESTS CAN BENEFIT STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS



TEACHERS RECEIVED "SOME" OR "LITTLE" TRAINING ON HOW TO USE TEST RESULTS FOR DIAGNOSTIC PURPOSES

Source: Belden, Russonello, Stewart poll for *Education Week*, 2001

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▶ A BETTER BALANCE IN TESTING AND TEACHING

30% AGREE

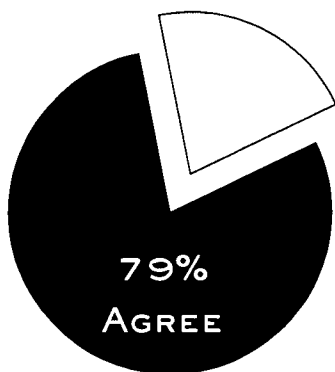
STATEWIDE ACADEMIC STANDARDS HAVE LED TO "JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT" OF TEACHING THAT PARALLELS THE CONTENT OF STATE TESTS

67% AGREE

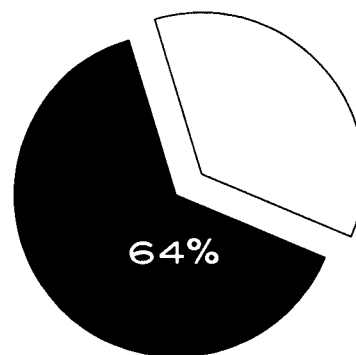
INSTRUCTION EMPHASIZES TESTS TOO MUCH

Source: *Quality Counts, Education Week, 2001*

▶ COURSEWORK IS MORE CHALLENGING



CURRICULUM IS MORE DEMANDING THAN IT WAS THREE YEARS EARLIER



ATTRIBUTE THIS CHANGE TO STANDARDS

Source: Belden, Russonello, Stewart poll for *Education Week, 2001*

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▶ PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND LACK OF DISCIPLINE ARE TOP PROBLEMS FACING SCHOOLS

58%

LACK OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

28%

LACK OF DISCIPLINE

22%

LACK OF FUNDING

19%

CLASS SIZES THAT ARE TOO LARGE

Source: Hart/Teeter ETS poll, May 2002

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WHAT STUDENTS THINK ...

▶ STUDENTS TAKE LEARNING SERIOUSLY

82%

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS ARE "ABOUT RIGHT"

73%

GET NERVOUS ABOUT TESTS BUT CAN HANDLE IT

71%

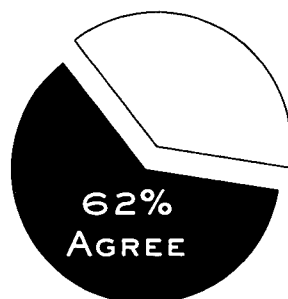
THE AMOUNT OF HOMEWORK AND TESTS ARE "ABOUT RIGHT"

56%

TAKE TESTS "VERY SERIOUSLY"

Source: Public Agenda, *Reality Check*, 2002

▶ TOO MUCH EMPHASIS IS PLACED ON TEST SCORES



IT WOULD BE WRONG TO USE THE RESULTS
OF JUST ONE TEST AS A BASIS FOR
PROMOTION OR GRADUATION

Source: Public Agenda, *Reality Check*, 2002

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▶ COULD WORK HARDER IN SCHOOL

71% AGREE

"MOST STUDENTS DO THE BARE MINIMUM THEY NEED TO GET BY"

56% AGREE

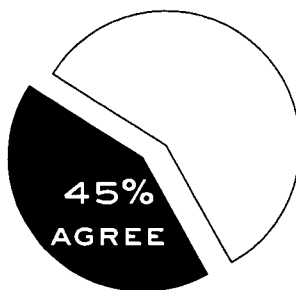
"I COULD TRY HARDER" IN SCHOOL

45% AGREE

"I'M ALREADY TRYING MY BEST TO DO WELL IN SCHOOL"

Source: Public Agenda, *Reality Check*, 2002

▶ CONCERNED WITH LOW GRADUATION STANDARDS

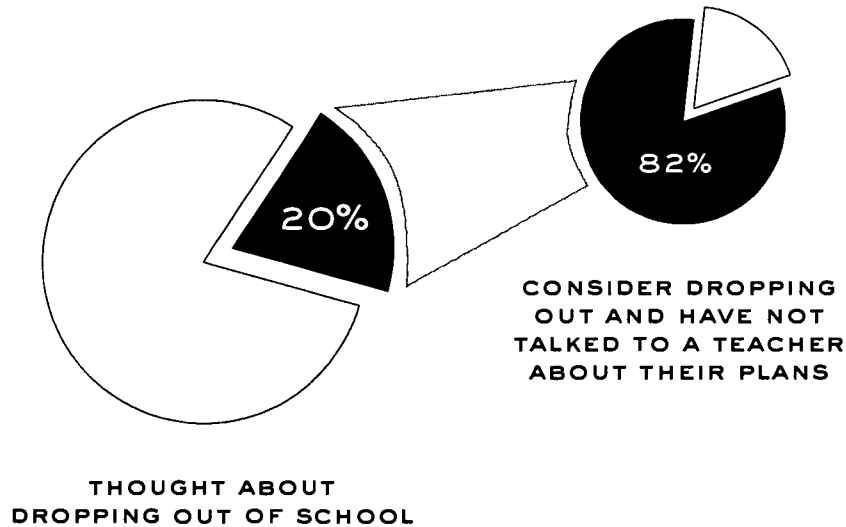


"SOME KIDS GRADUATE FROM SCHOOL EVEN
THOUGH THEY HAVEN'T LEARNED WHAT
THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO"

Source: Public Agenda, *Reality Check*, 2002

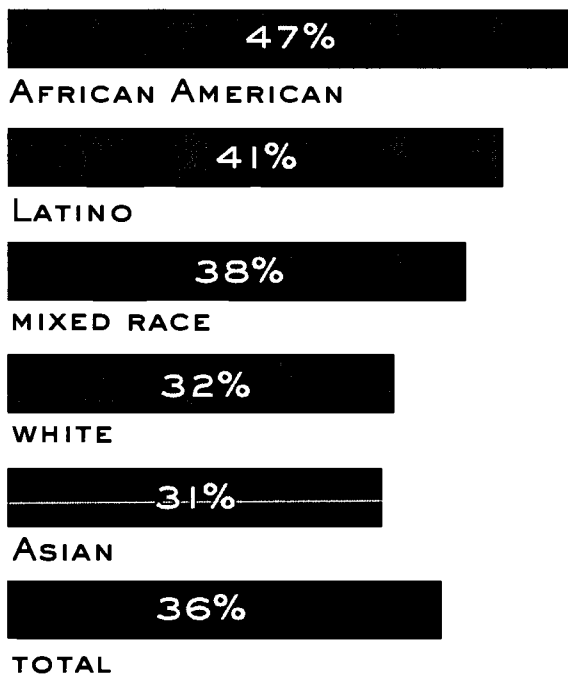
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► **CONSIDER DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL AND DON'T CONSULT THEIR TEACHERS ABOUT OPTIONS**



Source: *The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher*, 2002

► **TEACHER ENCOURAGEMENT IS AN IMPORTANT MOTIVATOR FOR ALL STUDENTS**



Source: *Minority Student Achievement Network*, 2002

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► DESIRE TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL IS HIGHEST AMONG MINORITY STUDENTS

Students report that friends think it is "very important" to study hard and get good grades.



AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS



ASIAN MALE STUDENTS



HISPANIC MALE STUDENTS



WHITE MALE STUDENTS



AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE STUDENTS



ASIAN FEMALE STUDENTS



HISPANIC FEMALE STUDENTS



WHITE FEMALE STUDENTS

Source: Minority Student Achievement Network, 2002

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RESOURCES ...

Accountability for All, Public Education Network/*Education Week* poll:
www.publiceducation.org/nationalpolls.asp

Albert Shanker Institute, American Federation of Teachers: www.aft.org

Americans for Better Education: www.bettered.org

Belden, Russonello, Stewart poll for *Education Week*: www.edweek.org/sreports/qc01/pdfs/qcresearch.pdf

The Business Roundtable: www.brt.org

Demanding Quality Public Education in Tough Economic Times, Public Education Network/*Education Week* poll: www.publiceducation.org/pdf/2003PollReport.pdf

Hart/Teeter ETS poll: www.ets.org/aboutets/survey2002.html

The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: www.metlife.com

Minority Student Achievement Network: www.msanetwork.org

Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll: www.pdkintl.org/kappan/k0209pol.htm

Public Agenda, *Reality Check*: www.publicagenda.org/specials/rc2001/reality.htm

Quality Counts, Education Week, 2001: www.edweek.org/sreports/qc01/

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